



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES  
GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,  
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

**Thursday, February 6, 1997**

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Governor's Lunar New Year message .....	1

**Friday, February 7, 1997**

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Acting Governor's statement .....	3
Parade accident .....	3

**Sunday, February 9, 1997**

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Heavy penalties for offenders of labour laws in 1996 .....	4

Governor's Lunar New Year message

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is the text of the Lunar New Year address delivered by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, this (Thursday) evening:

Another New Year. A very special one this, for every family in Hong Kong and for Hong Kong as a whole. We know the reason for that - this is the last new year before the transfer of sovereignty this summer. So, it's a poignant and exciting time for everybody. Particularly poignant for me and my wife and our youngest daughter, because we'll be leaving Hong Kong, which has been our home for five years, at the end of June.

Unfortunately we haven't had our two elder girls, Kate and Laura, with us while I've been Governor. They've come on holidays. They've seen what a very special place Hong Kong is. But like so many of you, I've had children away from Hong Kong finishing their education, and starting their careers, and I'd be telling you a terrible untruth if I didn't admit that we've missed them a great deal from time to time.

But our youngest daughter, like my wife and myself, has greatly enjoyed living in Hong Kong. She's had a wonderful education. She's made marvellous friends, and I think it's going to be particularly difficult for her when she leaves the place which she regards as home.

When we leave we'll be looking back on many friendships made, and I hope that the friends we've made will be friends for life. I'd certainly like to think that, at a New Year.

I suppose when we look back in Hong Kong over the last months, we see once again a story of extraordinary success.

The Hong Kong economy is one of the best ..... best performing in the world. We're the freest economy in the world, according to American think-tanks. We've been very happy to see our growth rate staying pretty high, and we've seen inflation come down.

We've seen unemployment figures fall. Any unemployment is too much, but at least we're creating more jobs again. And we've seen our reserves - the amount of money that we've got as a community in the bank - we've seen our reserves increasing even more over the last months.

That economic strength has enabled us to do what a caring community like this wants to see the Government doing. Making better provision for the elderly, for the disabled, for the disadvantaged, for all those who don't have as successful and prosperous a time in society as the majority.

It's right to take care of them, and it's right also - I think - for us to have started to involve the community in a discussion of our long-term housing strategy, because the most important thing in every family's life, apart from the health and education of their children, is to have a decent roof over their heads. So housing matters to everyone.

Well, we look forward from this New Year to the challenging year ahead. I think we can do so with quite a bit of confidence. There aren't many places around the world where you could say that the economy had doubled in strength over the last dozen or so years. There aren't many places around the world, with such a fine civil service as we've got.

There aren't many places around the world where you can point to as great social stability as there is in Hong Kong. And what's one of the signs of that? Well, the fact that here in Hong Kong our crime has been falling and is now actually lower than it was in the early 1980's.

So Hong Kong is a successful and decent place for everyone to live in. I very much hope that it will continue to be even more successful, that it will continue to be a splendid place in which you can bring up your family, and that when you look back at the next Chinese New Year, when you look back on this year, you'll be able to see another one which has been very successful.

I'll leave Hong Kong this summer, with - as I said - a good deal of nostalgia, a good deal of feeling for one of the finest places in the world, one of the greatest cities in the world, and I'm sure that Mr Tung - when he becomes Chief Executive of the SAR - will be committed to doing all he can to keep things that way.

So, to all of you watching at home - Sun Chun Fai Lok.

End

Acting Governor's statement

\* \* \* \* \*

The following is a statement from the Acting Governor, Mrs Anson Chan:

"I was saddened to learn of the Lunar New Year Parade accident. On behalf of the community, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the victims and their families. I would also like to send my regards to our Police colleagues who risked their lives while carrying out duties. I wish all injured a speedy recovery so that they can celebrate the New Year with their family."

End

Parade accident

\* \* \* \* \*

One person died and 31 others were injured in a traffic accident during the Lunar New Year parade in Tsim Sha Tsui East this (Friday) afternoon.

The deceased, a 46-year-old European woman was certified dead before arriving at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. A 32-year-old man and a 33-year-old woman were admitted to the hospital in "critical" condition. Two men and three women aged between 37 and 60 were also admitted in conditions ranging from "satisfactory" to "poor".

The remaining 24 casualties, comprising eight men, six women, five girls and five boys, aged between three and 45, had been discharged after treatment.

Meanwhile, Social Welfare Department's Medical Social Workers at Queen Elizabeth Hospital had visited the injured at wards to offer counselling and financial assistance from the Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Scheme.

End

### Heavy penalties for offenders of labour laws in 1996

\* \* \* \* \*

There were 4,438 convicted cases in 1996 relating to employers breaching labour laws, according to figures released by the Labour Department today (Sunday).

These convictions resulted in a total fine of \$10.1 million, representing an increase of 21 per cent compared with the figure in 1995.

Acting Senior Labour Officer (Prosecutions), Mrs Tonia Leung, said today that the department would continue to protect employee rights and benefits by prosecuting employers who did not abide by the labour laws.

"Employers should take the statutory provisions seriously. Otherwise, they will face prosecutions and have to pay heavy penalties for their malpractices," she said.

Among the convicted cases in 1996, 79.5 per cent were relating to the violation of the Employment Ordinance (EO) and its subsidiary regulations. The largest share of offences involved the failure to comply with provisions on statutory holidays and restrictions imposed on working hours of women and young employees in industrial employment.

"In recent years, the department has stepped up prosecutions against offences involving payment of wages. Employers should make sure that wages are paid not later than seven days after the due date. They will be prosecuted for violating this provision without a reasonable cause," said Mrs Leung.

A record high penalty of nearly \$500,000 was imposed on a company in 1996 for not paying wages to imported workers within the prescribed statutory time limits and not granting a statutory holiday as provided under the EO.

In 1996, 120 cases of wages offences were convicted, showing a 100 per cent increase as compared with the figure in 1995. Also, the average fine for such offences also rose from \$7,500 in 1995 to \$13,000 in 1996, representing an increase by 73 per cent.

Mrs Leung also reminded employers that pregnant employees were protected from dismissals without justifiable causes.

In 1996, 13 employers were convicted for breaching provisions on maternity protection. In one of these cases, the fine imposed was as high as \$30,000 plus \$3,000 cost.

On the other hand, 874 cases were convicted under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (ECO) in 1996. The total fines amounted to \$2.8 million, representing an increase of 38 per cent.

Of these cases, 701 involved the failure of employers to take out compulsory insurance policies for employees and 73 were related to the failure to effect employee compensation payments.

In 1996, 58 employers were convicted for terminating the employment contracts of injured employees as prohibited under the ECO.

"The fine for violating the provisions under the ECO can be very high," Mrs Leung warned.

She also cited one case in which an employer was fined \$70,000 for failing to take out compulsory insurance, failing to report an industrial accident to the Labour Department and failing to pay periodical payments to the injured employee.

Mrs Leung reminded employers that the maximum fines for offences under both the EO and ECO were substantially revised in 1995 and 1996 respectively.

"Employers should refrain from contravening provisions of these ordinances, or they are liable to very heavy penalties," she said.

End